

MUSKEGON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded 1972

Vol. 22 No. 2

February 2022

T W I G T A L K

Newsletter



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[Celebrating 50 years in 2022](#)

President's Message

By Dawn Westcomb Kelley -

HAPPY 50th ANNIVERSARY MUSKEGON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY 2022!

FEBRUARY



Valentine's Day



Some of you have ZOOM on your computer or have done ZOOM meetings with other societies or groups with Zoom, but we have not. Well, I finally have ZOOM on the computer and that is a big thing for me. Yea! We still have to know if it is going to work for our society.

I am also checking out Google Meet, which seems to be just a little easier to work with than ZOOM. More information will be coming soon.

Black History Month is February 1 through February 28.

Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. This year's theme for Black History Month, is "Black Health and Wellness". It takes a look at how American healthcare has often underserved the African-American community.

Groundhog Day is celebrated in the United States and Canada on **February 2nd** of each year. Groundhog Day is a day of wonder and curiosity for many people based on the activities of a groundhog arising out of its winter slumber to check for his shadow to determine if we can expect more winter or an early spring.

Valentine's Day is a very special day for many. Some of you have Valentines mementos from years ago that you have kept. If so, we invite you to share them with society. We would love to see the different Valentines from years ago.

Presidents Day - From Wikipedia, "the free encyclopedia".

Presidents' Day, officially **Washington's Birthday**, is celebrated on the third Monday of February to honor all persons who served in the Office of Ppresident of the United States. The federal holiday specifically honors George Washington, who led the Continental Army to victory in the American Revolutionary War, presided at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and was the first president of the United States.

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Family Search Research

We are now making appointments for in-person “one-on-one” family history research. Appointments are available for Tuesday through Saturday by contacting the Society at 1972mcgs@gmail.com or by calling the Local History & Genealogy Department at 231-722-8016.

1950 Federal Census

According to the "72-Year Rule," the National Archives releases census records to the general public 72 years after Census Day. As a result, the 1930 census records were released April 1, 2002, and the 1940 records were released April 2, 2012. The 1950 census records will be released in **April 2022**.

TIP - From Family Tree Magazine

This is an important tip to remember. Cross-reference City Directories with the census. Be sure to check directories for the year before, the year of and the year after the census to see if your ancestors moved during this time. Keep in mind, that the information you find in a 1910 directory was compiled the previous year, 1909—before the 1910 census came calling.

A Case of Mistaken Identity

Who Did We Bury?

By Frances Harrington

Marinus Bras was born in Borssele, Zeeland, Netherlands, on January 1, 1854, to Gerardus and Jacomina (Bruijnooge) Bras. Maria Hoebeke was born in 's-Bravenpolder, Zeeland, Netherlands, November 14, 1851, to Anthonie and Rachel (Vermare) Hoebeck. They were married in Borssele on May 9, 1878. Maria had one daughter, Rachel P. born in 1877, and together, she and Marinus had two sons, Geerard born in 1879, and another son who was stillborn in 1882. Marinus' occupation was listed as “arbeider” (in a Netherlands census) which means worker or laborer” in Dutch.

In 1883, Marinus Bras, his wife, Maria, and their daughter, Rachel, and son, Geerard, boarded the screw steamer “P. Caland” in Rotterdam, Netherlands, headed for America. They traveled in the steerage, which meant that they were by no means, people of wealth. The steerage was actually the cargo compartment. The steerage decks were used to provide the cheapest and lowest class of travel. It would have taken about a week or more to get to New York. Like so many other Dutch who traveled to America, it was probably because of religious persecution or for better economic opportunities. By 1900, one-third of all the Dutch who were born in the U.S. lived in Michigan, and most of them, in West Michigan.

The Bras family settled in Muskegon where, for most of his life here, Marinus worked doing manual labor in the lumber mills and then in area iron and brass foundries. At some point, his surname was changed to Brace, and his given named to Martin. Maria was called Mary, and their son Geerard was changed to Gerrit and given the nick-name “Jerry”. Mary gives birth to 5 more children: Antho-ny in 1884, Jacob in 1885, William in 1889, Minnie in 1892, and Anna in 1896.

Gerrit left home in 1898, at the age of 19. He seldom wrote to his family so they weren't sure, at any given time, where he was living. Then, on 3 August 1908, the “Miller Bros. Ranch 101, Wild West Show” came to Muskegon. A friend of the family, Klaas Kooi, went to one of the two performances that Monday. He noticed a familiar face working with the show and called out his name...it was Ger-rit! The two men spoke for a minute and made plans to meet up later. Klaas left the show grounds and went to see the Brace family. He told them that he had seen Gerrit working with the show. They didn't believe him until they saw Gerrit for themselves. They had a short reunion because the show

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was leaving soon. It turns out that for the past 7 years, Gerrit had been a cowboy, and had traveled throughout the West. It was a while before they heard from him again and this time, he was working in Chicago for an electric company.

Anthony pretty much stayed in Muskegon, living in his parent's home and working for area foundries, like his father.

Jacob left Muskegon in 1909. He and a couple friends headed west looking for work. They ended up in a small town called Reynolds which was in Grand Forks, North Dakota, where Jacob found work on a harvesting crew, traveling throughout that region, working on a threshing machine. He wasn't much of one for keeping regular communications with his family, much like Gerrit. In July of 1914, he made a short visit back to Muskegon to visit family and friends. Then on August 21st, his parents received a telegram from the coroner in Edgeley, North Dakota, telling them that their son had died on August 19th. The family was devastated. Mr. & Mrs. Brace contacted Tiede Clock (Clock Funeral Home) and he made arrangements to have the body brought back to Muskegon. The body arrived on August 24th where it was viewed by Jacob's family and about 75 of his friends, followed by a small funeral, and burial that day. After the funeral, Jacob's sister Minnie wrote to his landlady, Mrs. C. O. Gorder, requesting she send his belongings back to them in Muskegon. She told her how sad they all were, and what a nice funeral service they had for Jacob with so many people attending. Mrs. Gorder received that letter on Saturday morning, August 29th. Later that day, the Brace family receives a telegram stating: "News you got wrong. I am well. Will write. Jacob Brace". The family couldn't believe what they were reading. How could anyone play this kind of a practical joke, sending such a cruel message to their grieving family? After all, they had all viewed the body at the funeral. The next day, they received a visitor. It was Jacob Schaalma, one of the friends their son had gone to Dakota with, and he was in fact, Jacob's roommate at Mrs. Gorder's place. He had come to visit his family and was stopping to see Mr. & Mrs. Brace to let them know that their son was alive and that he had been with him just the day before. The family was overjoyed! Jacob was really alive! It wasn't a cruel joke after all! Then, it hit them – if Jacob is alive, then who did we bury?

At first, they thought that Jacob must have bought a ticket for the hospital, lost it, and someone (who must have looked just like Jacob) found it and went to the hospital and died with their only identification being that ticket. (Note: in those days, hospitals made money by selling tickets which entitled that person to so many visits at the hospital during that year. Also, this was a rural community with no large facilities so, the "hospital" might have been nothing more than a doctor's office with a couple of rooms where patients could stay for a short time to recover from whatever was wrong with them). But that "ticket" explanation didn't make sense to them. Then they thought of William. He had left town but they were pretty sure he was in Idaho, and he had curly hair and the person that was buried had straight hair. That only left Gerrit, but Gerrit was in Chicago, wasn't he? Meanwhile, they receive Jacob's letter telling them to, "write to me with all the details of what has happened, so I can travel to Edgeley to investigate how I came to die there, without my knowledge".

Mr. & Mrs. Brace contacted Tiede Clock on the 30th, to let him know of what has developed. He immediately telegraphs the sheriff in Edgeley, and asks him to investigate. He also arranges for the body to be exhumated, and the exhumation is done the next day, August 31, ten days after it was buried. Before the casket is opened, Mr. Clock asks if Gerrit has any identifying marks, in case it is him. They told him that Gerrit had a large scar on his right knee from a cut he received falling from a telephone pole when he was a boy. After the body is examined by Mr. Clock and he finds such a scar on the right knee, Mr. & Mrs. Brace carefully look the body over and make a positive identification...it is their eldest son, Gerrit. The body is immediately re-buried back in Oakwood Cemetery. They had no idea what Gerrit was doing in North Dakota. They realize that Gerrit died all alone, just 75 miles from his brother, Jacob, and neither one knew the other was so close. Now they start to

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grieve all over again. Mr. Clock later receives a death certificate from Edgeley with the name “Jerry Brace”. He was 36 years old.

I kept asking myself, how could Mr. and Mrs. Brace *not* recognize that the body in that casket they thought was Jacob’s, was actually Gerrit’s? What mother, wouldn’t be able to recognize their son if they’d just seen him a month before? Then, I looked over the news clippings again. I thought about

the telegram, the one that came telling of the death. We don’t know if it mentioned Jacob by name or just said “your son” and we don’t know if it stated the reason for his death. Telegrams were usually very brief messages, just enough to get the main facts across. Don’t forget, Jacob had a job that took him all over the region, and the fact that the death occurred in Edgeley, and not in Reynolds (where Jacob was actually renting a room) wouldn’t raise any red flags to make them question that it wasn’t Jacob. Since the only son they knew to be living in North Dakota was Jacob, they naturally would have assumed it was him.

Also, even though they were 6 years apart, the two men were known to have looked a lot alike. By the time the body got here, he had already been dead for 5 days. I tried to get a death record from North Dakota but was told they don’t have records going back that far (1914 really?). So, I went to the Hackley Library Local History & Genealogy Department. I remembered that they have books of Clock Funeral Home records going way back. I know that some of the old funeral home and/or cemetery records often list the cause of death for the person who was buried. Sure enough...the 1914 Clock Funeral Home book lists Jerry Brace, with his cause of death being pneumonia. If the person in the casket didn’t look exactly like Jacob, they probably thought it was because of whatever may have caused his death. Remember, these people were grieving. I’m sure, when the body got there, they weren’t thinking, “maybe if I look close enough, I’ll find out they’ve made a mistake and this isn’t my son”. More likely, they were thinking how sick he must have been to have aged so much in such a short time. So now, looking at this more sensitively, and less judgmentally, I can see how this might have happened.

Martin Brace was 78 when he died in 1932. He was still working in the foundry when he was 76 according to the 1930 Census. Mary died in 1942 at age 91 while living with her daughter, Anna. I lost track of Mary’s daughter Rachel who, up to 1900, was working as a domestic for the lumberman, Carleton Hamilton, on Clay Avenue. After that, she seems to disappear. Anthony never married and died at the mental facility in Traverse City, in 1929 at age 45. Jacob, also, never married, and died in Beltrami, Minnesota, in 1940. His obituary said he died of old age at the “Old Folks Home”. It also said he had no known relatives, so his mother, brother William, and sisters Anna and Minnie (who were still alive at the time) were never notified of his death and would never have known what became of him. He was 55.

William married Mamie B. Hogan in 1922. They raised their family in Kennewick, Washington. He died in 1965 at 76 years of age. Minnie married Theodore Musgrave in 1917. They raised their family in Muskegon County. She died at 77 in 1969. Anna married Fred Otten in about 1929. They also lived in Muskegon County and raised their family here. She was 92 when she died in 1988.

Sources: Genealogybank.com, Muskegon Chronicle; Findagrave.com; Ancestry.com; Family Search.com; swierenga.com; Northland Times, Beltrami, MN; Newspapers.com; and Hackley Library Family History & Genealogy Department.

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Marking Time

A Finer View

By Cristine Bouwkamp
Superior Monument/ Patten Monument Co.

Google maps have changed our ability to see our world in a fun way. Start anywhere on the map and zoom in and you can see buildings and streets as if you are standing in front of them. Zoom back out and see the whole city at once. It is a great way to enjoy a view you would never see otherwise. Genealogy is similar.

Local history, like history in general, is a study of individual people, or groups of people, or of events. Genealogy is the study of a particular line of ancestry. The first gives the broad view of a community, and the latter is the details of that community. Both studies are extremely important to tell the full story of a community.

Cemeteries are a great place to see a larger view. You can see familiar names on the largest monuments and mausoleums that coincide with street names and building names. Looking around we see trends in shapes and types of granite monuments from an era of a particular stonecutter or monument builder. A closer look at the monuments shows the finer details of the names, relationships and dates of birth, death and marriage. We scope the landscape, see family plots, and are able to link one stone to another.

At one time, finding more information about someone or something was much more difficult. The fine people who dedicate themselves to history and genealogy have gathered and collected information. The tedious work of pouring over paper records and books and listening to the local storytellers is still done by some and the rest of the world reaps the benefits. Hard work and good technology have been brought together to give us the finer details in the click of a mouse button.

Moving into the digital age has brought the finer view to even clearer focus. The name you see on the monument now has records, news articles, legal records and digital links to more families in other cities. We can tie together people, places, and news to tell the full story of our community. QR code tags on cemetery markers have taken an even larger step into the access of information. A quick barcode scan with a phone at the gravesite can give a person pictures, links, family videos, and ancestry information in an instant. Anything a family has added to a memory page is visible by a visitor.

Cemeteries tell the story of community. Those who built it, loved it, expanded it, and pursued dreams in it... they are there. Looking around a cemetery I see a community, and people, and the things and people they loved, and finally the details that made them (and us) who we are today. It is a beautiful collection of history and genealogy in the place we choose to live, love and die.

My hope is that cemeteries do not become a thing of the past like a spot frozen in time and a nod to bygone days. I hope it will continue to be a place of life and beauty and stories. To see and understand their families and their community. I hope people still stop and enjoy the view.



No Research at the Muskegon County Clerk — Until Further Notice

You can check out their website for further updates at:

<https://co.muskegon.mi.us/407/County-Clerk>

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You will receive confirmation of your registration by email. You will also receive reminders before the webinar. **The reminder email will have information on accessing the handout material.** On the day of the session, click the link that you received in your invitation to *GoToWebinar.com* to join the online session.

NEXT UP:

Saturday, February 5
1:00 PM - Eastern

Untying the Knot: Divorce Records
by Kimberly Nagy, MD, PLCGS



Divorces were more common than one might think. This lecture will discuss the history of divorce laws, clues that there may have been a divorce, the process of finding divorce records, and the type of information that might be found in those records.

Kimberly Nagy MD PLCGS has been working on her own genealogy for 45 years. She is a former trauma surgeon and educator who is now a professional genealogist and lineage society specialist.

Wednesday, February 16
9:00 PM - Eastern

How to Write Compelling Family History Without Being Naturally Creative
by Devon Noel Lee



If your family history project lacks luster, learn how to make the story shine using simple literary devices to enhance your story, even if you lack a creative writing background.

Devon Noel Lee helps individuals strengthen their future by connecting to the past in meaningful and fun ways. She's the owner of Family History Fanatics, a genealogy education company that coordinates virtual learning events and is a popular YouTube channel. With a journalist's heart, Devon seeks out the story behind her living and deceased relatives.

Saturday, March 5
1:00 PM - Eastern

WorldCat and ArchiveGrid: Finding Books, Manuscripts, and More
by Karen Fortin



A treasure trove of genealogical material is available in books, manuscripts, and other printed resources. However, much of this material is scattered in libraries and archives throughout the country. WorldCat and ArchiveGrid are online resources that allow you to search many of these repositories to identify and locate materials on the families and topics you are researching.

Karen A. Fortin has degrees in History and Library and Information Science and a passion for research. She is a member of various local, state, and national genealogical societies, and loves to help people explore their family history so that they can better understand their ancestors and the world in which they lived. One of her goals is to help people explore historical periods, places, and events so that they can better understand their ancestors and the world in which they lived

MUSKEGON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

** Our membership begins January 1 through December 31**

- New Membership Renewal Membership
- \$25.00 Single in the USA \$30.00 Single USD\$ outside the USA
- \$50.00 Double in the USA
- We are a non-profit organization 501 (c) (3)
If you wish to make a donation, please fill in the amount \$ _____

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*NAME _____

*ADDRESS _____

*CITY _____ *STATE _____ *ZIP _____

Please make check or money orders payable to MCGS

**MAIL TO:
MCGS**

Attn: MEMBERSHIP
C/O HPL - Torrent House
315 W. Webster Ave.
Muskegon, MI 49440-1208

MCGS USE ONLY

Date Received _____
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Rev. Oct 2021

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

MCGS MEETINGS

2nd Thursday at 6:30 p.m.
VFW Post 3195
5209 Grand Haven Rd.
Norton Shores, MI



2022 Meetings
?

Genealogy Family History Workshops

Torrent House Local History & Genealogy Department
315 W. Webster Ave.

One-on-One Appointments Available!

Please call 231 722-8016 or email us at 1972mcgs@gmail.com for an appointment.



LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY DEPARTMENT

Call 231-722-8016

Hours will change

January 4, 2022
Sunday and Monday — Closed
Tuesday through Saturday
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



2022 OFFICERS & COMMITTEES

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Tom Shepherd
Gail Taggart

HISTORY BOOK VOL. 2

We care what happens to our members, their families, and everyone around us. Our History Book, Volume 2 will be extend until further notice. It is very important to start working on your stories now.

Do not wait to put your family history in Vol. 2

If you have any questions or need help, contact us at our 1972mcgs@gmail.com or send your information to Kathy DeCormier at middlaker@frontier.com — In the subject area put "History Book Volume 2".

TWIG TALK

A monthly publication of:
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